

I raided my small stock of cherry to make this project. It's a good opportunity to use up offcuts; indeed I was so anxious not to waste material that I edge-jointed some of the components to make up the widths required.

This is a typical example of a small project which is quite demanding on skills, patience, and workshop resources. A router table is almost essential for making the drawers. I also tried out an experiment on my planer thicknesser when preparing the ends – a method I've never seen in a book or magazine – and it worked to perfection. **More about this item...**

Getting started

When preparing the material to be edge-jointed, I planed it a little thicker than required. Because of the small sizes involved I relied on glue alone for this, and once dry I planed the



BY GORDON WALSER



Jewellery store

There can't be a lady in the land who wouldn't appreciate a project like this to store small items of jewellery. Its splayed ends, concave front and restrained decoration give it a unique appearance

components to the final thickness required and trimmed them to width. I was careful with the thicknessing to ensure it matched my 8mm router cutter and got a good fit in the benches once these were cut. When preparing the wood for the ends, I cut this long enough for two, but trimmed the ends of the piece square.

The positions of the benches were now marked on the ends, and I set up my router to cut these to a depth of 8mm. These benches are stopped, photo 1. I used the same cutter to form the rebates at the rear edges.

The tapering trick

The next stage was to prepare the taper to the ends, which were still one piece of wood. My trick of using the thicknesser for this was to add a packing piece under the side where material needed to be removed, photo 2. This packing piece was planed to a thickness which would raise one side of the wood by 15mm, and was temporarily secured with double-sided tape.

Now the wood could be passed through the thicknesser as normal, photo 3, making



1 The extent of the benches is controlled by a stop clamped to the router table fence

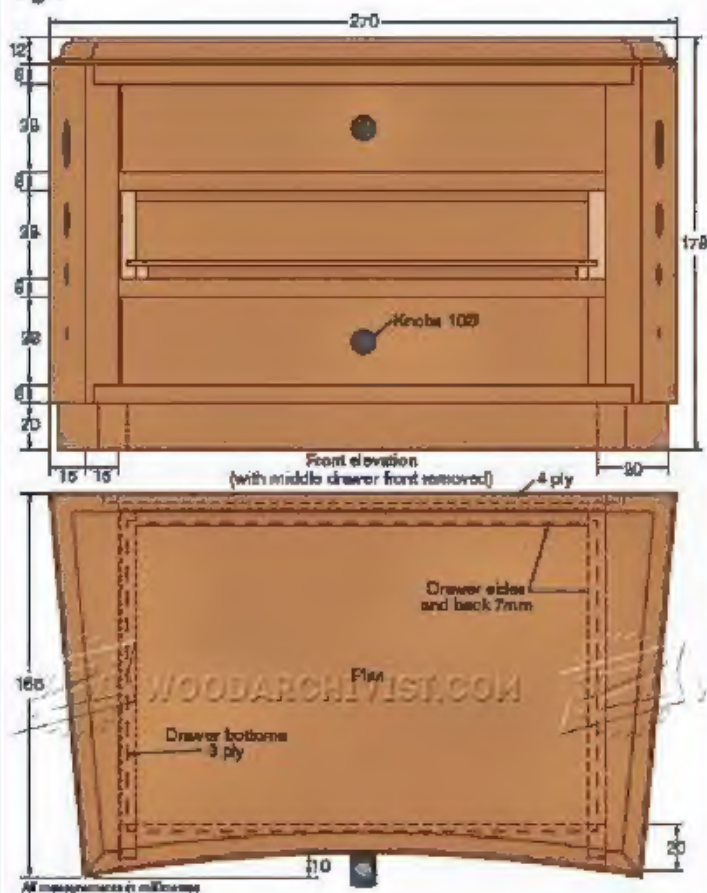


2 The two end panels are still in one piece at this stage. Note the packing piece...



3 ...which lifts the workpiece at an angle as it's passed through the thicknesser

Fig 1



JEWELLERY CHEST CUTTING LIST

All dimensions are in millimetres

Part	Qty	L	W	T
Top	1	270	185	12
Div ^a	2	170	185	30
Drawer divider	4	250	150	8
Back (plywood)	1	280	148	4
Plinth (front)	1	250	30	20
Drawer front	2	240	38	7
Drawer back	2	240	22	7
Drawer side	8	170	38	7
Drawer base	3	170	38	3

^a Prepare the ends as one piece, and cut them to their exact length later.

Widths and thicknesses are net; an allowance has been added to the lengths.

You will also need hardwood offcuts for the inlays and drawer knobs, and self-adhesive baize for lining the drawer bases.

several passes until the whole of the upper surface was planed flat. My experiment was a total success, but I must stress that this technique would not be suitable for a wide piece of wood which was also quite thin; it would tend to flex, while the piece for the ends was relatively thick and therefore quite rigid.

Tackling the inlays

Next, while the packing piece was still in position, I marked out the centres for the circular inlays. They were equally spaced, with the largest disc at the top. I bored the 8mm deep holes for these using my bench drill, photo 4; the packing I had left on ensured that the surface of the workpiece was level as I made the holes. I then used matching plug cutters to prepare the 8mm thick inlay discs from rosewood, photo 5.

Just enough adhesive

When gluing inlays in place, it's important not to use too much adhesive. If a pool of adhesive is left at the bottom of the recess, the inlay can't be driven fully home. The adhesive then dries fairly slowly and as it does it shrinks, drawing the inlay further into the wood. This can happen weeks after the project has been completed, and will show as a slight depression that's impossible to correct.

After inserting the discs into the end panels, I allowed them to dry overnight before flushing them off, photo 6. Sanding was left until later, which would also give the adhesive more time to dry thoroughly.

Shaping the edges

The front edge of the end panels had to be shaped to match the curved front. In theory this should be slightly hollow, but was simply planed as a bevelled edge with any attempt at making it concave left until later. Now I could cut this single piece of wood to give me the two ends required; only then could the rebates in their ends be formed for the top and bottom. These rebates were made as through cuts.

Matching the curve

Next I made a plywood template to match the curved front I was aiming for. I used my flexible curve to mark this, and a spokeshave and abrasive paper to smooth the sawn edge. Using the template, I could mark out the two drawer dividers, the top and the bottom, photo 7.

The bandsaw soon had the waste removed from these four pieces. I then held them together in the vice while I lightly spokeshaved them and completed the shaping with a flexible drum sander, photo 8. The front corners needed to be cut to match the benches, which are stopped at the front.

Assembly time

Now the ends and the middle two drawer dividers could be assembled and cramped, photo 9, followed the top and bottom panels. These are screwed as well as glued in position, photo 10. I used a steel rule across the front edges of the four members to ensure they were all in line.

I left the back off at this stage. Where a carcass is to include drawers, its absence helps when the drawers are being fitted, and makes visual checking for alignment easier.

Making the drawers

I prepared the material for the drawer sides, backs and fronts as normal, then cut these twelve pieces precisely to length. The extent of the lap dovetails at the front and the through dovetails were marked with a cutting gauge. Then the two parts making up each joint were labelled to ensure they would be cut and assembled to match.

Teckling the pins

Two pins were marked on the front and rear components, and I cut these to a slope of 1:7. The waste from the rear was removed by a combination of coping saw and chisel, while at the front the bulk of the waste was then removed by boring using a saw-tooth bit. This stage was carried out on a bench drill, with the depth being set to complete the hole exactly to the gauge line. These lap dovetails were finished by chiselling, using my pair of angle-sharpened chisels to cut into the acute corners alongside the pins, photo 11.

Cutting the tails

Now the tails could be marked on the side members of the drawers. This is carried out by marking directly from the pins using a very sharp pencil. Make sure that the labelling of the corners is carefully followed.

The waste from this part of the joint is removed entirely by dovetail and coping saws, finishing off by chiselling. For a sound joint, the dovetail saw must be used alongside the pencil lines, and just touching them on the waste side. Next, the sides and fronts could be grooved for the ply bottoms.

Assembling the drawers

Before cleaning up the inside surfaces of the drawer members, I bored a 10mm blind hole in the centre of each front to accept a simple knob I would turn out of rosewood to match the inlays at the ends. The drawers were then glued and assembled, photo 12, checked to ensure they were truly square and then weighed down so that they would remain free of twist while the adhesive dried, photo 13.



4 I bored the holes for the inlays using three different sizes of bit in my drill press



5 The matching rosewood inlays were then prepared using a range of plug cutters



6 I glued the slight inlays in place, left them to dry and then flushed them off



7 I made a template to mark the concave edges of the top, the bottom and the drawer dividers



8 Crimp the dividers together while you smooth their concave edges. I used a drum sander



9 Separate the two end panels, rebate them and assemble them with the two drawer dividers



10 Then glue and screw the top and bottom panels into their rebates in the carcass



11 Use a small chisel with an angled edge to trim the waste from the drawer dovetails



12 Glue both parts of the corner joints when assembling the drawer boxes



13 Put a weight on top of the assembled drawers to keep them flat while the glue dries



14 Use a simple template to mark the positions for the drawer stops on the divider and bottom panel



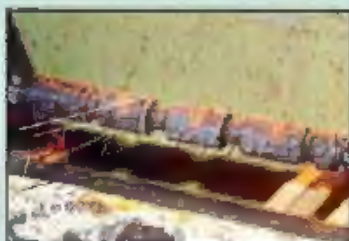
15 Test-fit the drawers in the carcass. Note that the drawer fronts are still flat at this stage...



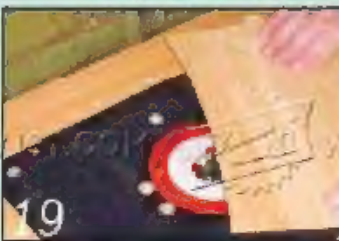
16 ...until their concave faces are marked from the drawer dividers and cut to shape on the bandsaw



17 Fit the drawers, clamp the carcass and sand the front surface so everything is perfectly flush



18 Turn and shape the three knobs on one blank, then separate them using a parting tool



19 Form a decorative edge moulding round the edge of the top panel on the router table



20 Glue and clamp the moulded top panel to the top of the carcass



21 Fit and shape the three pith components, then glue and clamp them in place



22 Apply three coats of cellulose lacquer, brushing the brush-down between coats



23 Glue the knobs in place in their holes and stick self-adhesive tape inside the drawers

Meanwhile I added drawer stops to the carcass, photo 14, using glue alone for this. Then I tested the fit of the drawers in the carcass, photo 15.

Shaping the drawer fronts

Very little further fitting was required. Only at this stage were the fronts of the drawers given their concave shape. The curve was marked directly from the drawer dividers in the carcass; then the waste was cut off on the bandsaw, photo 16.

Smoothing these sawn surfaces to match the front of the carcass proved to be easier than anticipated. I used my foam-filled drum sander, photo 17, followed by hand sanding.

Turning the knobs

I started these by turning a piece of rosewood to the same 10mm diameter as the holes in the drawer fronts. I then formed two shallow finger grooves on each knob using a rat-tail file across the work so they were opposite one another, photo 18. The three knobs required were formed in this way while the wood was still in one piece, and were then separated using a parting tool.

Next, each one was held in a drill chuck mounted in the headstock, and the outer ends were domed. Only very light sanding was required to complete them.

Topped and tailed

The next task was to prepare and fit the top panel. I made this to be 2mm smaller than the carcass at the front and ends, and formed a simple moulding along these edges on the router table, photo 19. This panel is glued and clamped to the top of the carcass, and is inset by 2mm from the front and side edges, photo 20. At this stage I added the plywood back, glued and pinned in place.

Only the pith remained to be tackled. This is simply three pieces of material fitted at the front corners, with the front piece formed with a concave front surface. They're glued and clamped in place, photo 21.

Finishing touches

After a final sanding, including lightly rounding the angles, it was time to apply the finish. I used pre-catalysed cellulose lacquer applied with a polisher's mop, photo 22. I dilute the lacquer with around 10 per cent of cellulose thinner, and flat down between coats. I abraded the top coat lightly with steel wool dipped in a soft wax polish, and finally buffed it with a soft cloth.

With the polishing completed, the drawer knobs were glued in place, and self-adhesive tape was fitted to the drawer bottoms, photo 23. Job done!